

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in this application:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) An information retrieval apparatus for performing information retrieval from an information source, said information retrieval apparatus comprising:

input means in which a selective inputting operation is performed;

database-access-interface means which accesses a database from a plurality of databases including first and second dictionaries as said information source for retrieving information in response to a use of said input means;

display means for displaying, in a form of an information bar, information that is obtained by accessing said database by said database-access-interface means, wherein said information bar consists of a plurality of lengthwise sections each corresponding to index-item information and being displayed in a staircase pattern, and wherein a length of each lengthwise section corresponds to a quantity of the index-item information therein;

cursor moving means for moving a cursor in response to the use of said input means in order to designate a position in a lengthwise direction of the information bar displayed in a staircase pattern by said display means; and

retrieval means for retrieving information, corresponding to the designated lengthwise position, from said database by using said database-access-interface means,

wherein the retrieved information is displayed on said display means, and

wherein the length of said information bar is determined by the number of displayable dots and the number of information in each information bar.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein:

said display means displays the index-item information corresponding to one of the plurality of lengthwise sections in which a position in the lengthwise direction of the displayed information bar is designated by using said cursor moving means.

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a built-in database accessed by said database-access-interface means.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said database-access-interface means accesses a database outside said information retrieval apparatus.

Claim 5. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said database-access-interface means uses a network to access a database outside said information retrieval apparatus.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) An information retrieval method for performing information retrieval from an information source, said information retrieval method comprising:

an input step in which a selective inputting operation is performed;

a display step for displaying information in the form of an information bar on display means, the displayed information being obtained by using database-access-interface means to access a database from a plurality of databases including first and second dictionaries as said information source for information retrieval in response to an execution of said input step, wherein said information bar is displayed as a plurality of lengthwise sections each corresponding to index-information and being

displayed in a staircase pattern, and wherein a length of each lengthwise section corresponds to a quantity of the index-information therein;

a cursor moving step for moving a cursor in response to the execution of said input step in order to designate a position in a lengthwise direction of the information bar displayed in a staircase pattern; and

a retrieval step for retrieving information corresponding to the designated position from said database by using said database-access-interface means,

wherein the retrieved information is displayed on said display means, and

wherein the length of said information bar is determined by the number of displayable dots and the number of information in each information bar.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval method according to Claim 6, wherein:

in said display step, said display means displays the index-item information corresponding to one of the plurality of lengthwise sections in which the position in the lengthwise direction of the displayed information bar is designated by using said cursor.

Claim 8. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval method according to Claim 6, wherein said database-access-interface means accesses a built-in database of an apparatus in which said information retrieval method is performed.

Claim 9. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval method according to Claim 6, wherein said database-access-interface means accesses a database outside an apparatus in which said information retrieval method is performed.

Claim 10. (Previously Presented) The information retrieval method according to Claim 6, wherein said database-access-interface means uses a network to access a database outside an apparatus in which said information retrieval method is performed.